



Biodiversity Newsflash 71

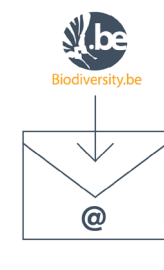
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Happy New Year


We wish you a beautiful year!
 Let 2017 be dedicated to biodiversity!
 We look forward to keep on collaborating with you this year!



1 | Your interest in receiving our news in your mailbox

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform publishes news on a regular basis. If you wish to receive news updates (an email twice a month), please [subscribe here](#). You will receive news related to biodiversity research and policy as well as calls announcements and events.

You can see our [latest news here](#) and the [upcoming events on this page](#). If you [subscribe](#) to our bi-monthly news update, you will receive the headlines of these two sections directly in your mailbox.



2 | Recommendations of Belgian experts to IPBES

On 21 November 2016, the [IPBES* National Focal Point](#) coordinated by the Belgian Biodiversity Platform organised an exchange meeting for Belgian experts engaged in the implementation of the [IPBES](#) work programme. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of progress made over the last year and to collect feedback on the functioning of the expert groups (e.g. experts involved in the regional assessments).

A summary of the feedbacks received from the experts is available [here](#). To read the full list of feedbacks from Belgian experts, please refer to the minutes of the meeting available [here](#).

The IPBES presentation given by Dr Hilde Eggermont, National Focal Point of IPBES is available [here](#).

For more information on IPBES or on how to get involved as a Belgian researcher, policy-maker or stakeholder, please refer to [IPBES Belgian Focal point website](#) or contact Dr Hilde Eggermont: h.eggermont@biodiversity.be

*IPBES: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services



3 | Results of EKLIPSE science-policy-society conference

On 6-7th December 2016, over 85 people from across Europe, from different disciplines and sectors, gathered in Brussels for the first EKLIPSE science-policy-society conference. The main aim of the conference was to let people know about EKLIPSE, its vision and functions, and to explore collectively how wider engagement could be achieved.

The EKLIPSE project has a [vision](#) to build an innovative, light, ethical and self-sustainable EU support mechanism for evidence-informed policy on biodiversity and ecosystem services. [Networking](#) is a key part of the mechanism: it will depend on the involvement of a wide range of decision-makers, scientists and other experts, and societal actors. For societal actors, EKLIPSE has developed a strategy, together with initiatives such as science cafes, and its [KNOCK discussion forum](#). The conference was a great opportunity to network, meet new colleagues and plan future EKLIPSE activities together.

There are many ways to get engaged in EKLIPSE, so check out: <http://www.eclipse-mechanism.eu>

The Belgian Biodiversity Platform is coordinating the activities on identification of research needs and emerging issues. For more information, please contact Estelle Balian: e.balian@biodiversity.be



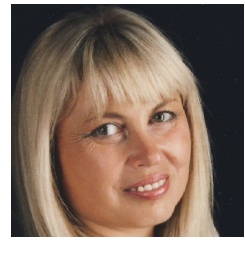
4 | Results of the North Sea conference

From November 7 to 10th, the [North Sea Open Science conference](#) took place in Ostend. The goal of the conference was to take stock of the present-day scientific knowledge on the North Sea ecosystem, its interactions with human activities and its management.

Presenters reflected upon current and future challenges for the North Sea management. Participatory discussions also took place using innovative formats to explore and challenge the knowledge of the attendees.

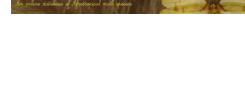
The conference participants also formulated advices towards a Marine Strategy Framework Directive-compliant research and management plan for the North Sea.

A report of the conference will soon be available.



5 | 3 questions to: Dr Jurate de Prins

Dr Jurate De Prins, taxonomist, collection and museum-based scientist and curator, has several interests mainly concerning Lepidoptera: taxonomy, invasive species, distribution, phylogeny, and also faunistics. Dr De Prins was born in Lithuania and has worked in different museums of several European countries.



Dr De Prins, you collaborate with the Belgian Biodiversity Platform on the AfroMoths data portal. Could you please describe this project?

For 14 years, I worked in museums focusing my research on insects in Africa and I understood there was a major gap of data available. In 2006, I organised a meeting called 'Afro-lep'. Ir André Heughebaert, the head of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform IT team, attended this meeting. André introduced his idea of developing a data portal that would contain verified information on datasets related to insects. The idea was to have a sort of modern searchable catalogue with the best available technology. And that's how the [AfroMoths](#) data portal was born. The website provides information on all African moth species for all interested users: researchers, citizen scientists, people working on climate change, scientists monitoring invasive species, people working in trade with plants (a lot of insects are introduced with plants from exotic countries); and simply for travellers who want to know what kind of insects they see across Africa. I think it is also a good way to 'give back' something to Africa, as the website is widely used by local populations as well. The website now contains datasets of over 38,000 species, with information on the species description, the distribution, the host plant, in which museum and in which collection the types are deposited, the distribution per country, the larval host plants and now we are adding parasites as well. We also have a gallery of 15,000 images, which is very helpful for our users.

Would you recommend the Belgian Biodiversity Platform to other scientists for the development of customised web portals such as AfroMoths?

Certainly! I have now been collaborating with the IT team of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform since 2006. They have excellent technical knowledge on how to efficiently extract a huge amount of data spread across hundreds of tables and data sheets, in order to present it into a searchable and user-friendly way on the web. I would call our collaboration: "symbiosis", because the Belgian Biodiversity Platform received verified data of excellent quality, and we in turn, were given professional IT support. I think it is very good that a governmental organisation provides such an efficient and practical service.

What are your plans for the future of AfroMoths?

The [AfroMoths](#) website is a great success. And in fact, it became my passion as I realised that it was possible to fill data gaps. I often see curators and taxonomists using the AfroMoths website because no one has time to read hundreds of pages on species. The concise verified information on this website with correct names, correct description dates, and correct authors, correct distribution data, verified host plants records and an unlimited gallery of diagnostic images is very useful for everyone working on biodiversity. Nicolas Noe, IT expert of the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, is now taking care of updating the website and the collaboration works very well. For us, the most important is that the information is well structured, verified and complete. We are only two scientists working on this project, myself and Willy De Prins. If we could receive support to have a team working full-time on the upgrade of the website, we could then have a more extensive photo gallery, we could check and verify the taxonomy of every species, and the distribution data could be controlled through a huge network of trained citizen scientists. We already have this to a certain extent, but we would need to coordinate it better. In an ideal world, I would like to see a sort of "Google for biodiversity in Africa", a data portal where all information on the biodiversity would be available in a modern, searchable and convenient way, to be used by everyone.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Biodiversity and global environmental change, PASTFORWARD Seminars, 25 January 2017

PASTFORWARD organises a series of three seminars on 25 January 2017 at Ghent University. The seminars will focus on:

- Long-term biodiversity-climate disequilibrium - a macro ecological perspective (Jens-Christian Svenning)
- Tree species coexistence - effects of biodiversity and global change drivers (Werner Härdtle)
- Above ground-below ground interactions in a changing world (Wim H. van der Putten)

PASTFORWARD is a project focusing on the development of trajectories of temperate forest plant communities under global change, combining hindsight and forecasting. The goal of the project is to build an integrative understanding of the interactive effects of land-use change, atmospheric deposition and climate warming on forest herb layer communities, starting from the insight that changes in herb layer communities are driven primarily by past land use, but can be modulated by atmospheric deposition, climate warming and forest management.

Register by sending a confirmation email to haben.blondeel@ugent.be
 Location: Room August Vermeylen, Het Pand (Ghent University).

Symposium on Citizen Science, Ghent, 22 February 2017

Five final-year biology students at Ghent University organise a symposium on Citizen Science on February 22, 2017. The symposium will consist of a series of lectures from 1 PM focusing on the following topics: the broad definition of Citizen Science; Several examples in Flanders; A critical look at the quality of the collected data; The motivation of citizens to actively participate in projects and how to encourage them as a scientist; The future for Citizen Science at national and European level; Educational, social and scientific interest; etc. A broad debate will close the day at 8PM.

More information: ugent.be/citizenscience